

Amendments to Claims

Claims 1-12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Original) A method of maintaining a viable culture in an activated sludge environment in the absence of carbon influx comprising:

- a) providing an activated sludge environment comprising:
 - (i) a carbon influx;
 - (ii) cultures of autotrophic, heterotrophic and facultative microorganisms;
 - (iii) a feed nutrient; and
 - (iv) an end electron acceptor;
- b) removing the feed nutrient from the activated sludge environment while continuously monitoring the concentration of polyhydroxyalkanoates present in the activated sludge environment;
- c) removing the carbon influx from the activated sludge environment when the concentration of polyhydroxyalkanoates is greater than about 15 to about 20 dry weight percent of the biomass;
- d) adding a minimal concentration of nitrate to the activated sludge environment of step (c);

wherein the cultures of autotrophic, heterotrophic and facultative microorganisms are maintained in a viable state in the absence of a carbon influx.

Claim 14 (Original). The method according to Claim 13, wherein the feed nutrient is selected from the group consisting of nitrate, ammonia, sulfate, sulfide, urea and phosphate.

Claim 15 (Original). The method according to Claim 13, wherein the carbon influx is removed from the activated sludge environment when the concentration of polyhydroxyalkanoates is greater than about 20 dry weight percent of the biomass.

Claim 16 (Original). The method according to Claim 13 wherein the removing the feed nutrient of step (b) occurs from about 8 to about 2 weeks prior to the removal of the carbon influx of step (c).